



For Immediate Release

Press Release

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Hospice Provides Compassionate Care Amid COVID-19 Challenges

Gainesville, FL, November 9, 2020 – The end of a loved one's life is a difficult time under any circumstances, but the COVID-19 pandemic has made things even more challenging for families as well as those providing hospice care.



A hospice worker looks on as a woman watches video messages celebrating her birthday from her home in Clarksville, Tenn. [Chris Davis/WTVF Via AP]

Requirements for protective gear and restrictions on visits to medical facilities and nursing homes, put in place to help prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus, have complicated end-of-life care and the ability of family members to spend time with loved ones during their final days. These changes have affected the more than 233,000 Americans who have died from COVID-19 as well as others in need of hospice care.

Pauline Taylor started March 2 as president and chief operating officer of Haven, which provides hospice care to patients and families in [Alachua and 17 other North Florida counties](#). Taylor has more than two decades of experience in the hospice field,

but nothing could have prepared her for her first month on the job at Haven.

On March 11, the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 outbreak [to be a global pandemic](#). The state of Florida subsequently [shut down visits](#) to assisted living facilities and nursing homes. Restrictions were also put in place in hospitals and other medical facilities to prevent the spread of the virus.

While hospice care is mostly provided at people's homes, Haven also operates hospice centers in Gainesville, Palatka, Lake City and Orange Park. Taylor said Haven put protections in place at those centers that allowed relatives to see each other, after sometimes being unable to do so for weeks due to visitation limits at hospitals.

“We were very intentional about saying ... hospice and end-of-life (care) are about bringing loved ones together, so how can we make that happen?” she said.

November marks National Hospice and Palliative Care Month, a time for raising awareness of the medical care, pain management and emotional support provided to those experiencing life-ending illnesses. Each year nearly 1.6 million people receive such care from hospice and palliative care providers in the U.S., according to the [National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization](#).

COVID-19 has changed all parts of health care, both in the treatment of people who have it and protections to keep people from catching it. The infectious nature of the virus increased the need for people from high-risk groups in particular to be able to access health care from their homes.

Hospice care was already focused on allowing people to stay in their homes to receive care, but the pandemic required caregivers to adjust their normal practices. Like other parts of health care, hospice care has made greater use of personal protective equipment and telemedicine.

“Our entire process has evolved since the beginning, but what hasn’t changed is our commitment to ensuring that we are able to provide bedside care, whether it is in our care centers or our patients’ homes when they need us,” said Dr. Carmelle Elie, Haven’s chief medical officer.

Conditions have changed since the early weeks of the pandemic, with [Florida loosening restrictions](#) on visits to nursing homes and assisted-living facilities in recent weeks. With COVID-19 cases again rising, it is uncertain whether new limits will have to be implemented.

But one thing is certain: Hospice care providers will continue to find ways to ensure end-of-life care is provided safely and compassionately.

About Haven: *Haven is the source for patients, their families and their healthcare providers to find answers to their advanced illness challenges. In addition to providing comfort through the compassionate delivery of hospice services, Haven offers Advance Care Planning, Palliative Care Consultations and Transitions services with a patient-centric focus. When health becomes a challenge, we will be your haven. For more information, visit www.beyourhaven.org or call 800-727-1889. Serving advanced illness needs in Florida since 1979 and licensed as a not-for-profit hospice since 1980.*

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